



School of Business

Mikkeli Campus

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH PROGRAMS

A Case Study on a Finnish Company

Anni Ilona Kämäräinen

International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
Supervisor: Kate Black
Date of submission: 6 April 2019

Declaration

By completing this cover sheet and declaration, I confirm that this assignment is my own work, is not copied from the work (published or unpublished) of any other person and has not previously been submitted for assessment either at Aalto University, or another educational establishment. Any direct or indirect uses of material (e.g.: text, visuals, ideas...) from other sources have been fully acknowledged and cited according to the conventions of the Harvard Referencing System.



School of Business

Mikkeli Campus

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH PROGRAMS

A Case Study on a Finnish Company

Anni Ilona Kämäräinen

International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
Supervisor: Kate Black
Date of submission: 6 April 2019

Declaration

By completing this cover sheet and declaration, I confirm that this assignment is my own work, is not copied from the work (published or unpublished) of any other person and has not previously been submitted for assessment either at Aalto University, or another educational establishment. Any direct or indirect uses of material (e.g.: text, visuals, ideas...) from other sources have been fully acknowledged and cited according to the conventions of the Harvard Referencing System.

Author: Anni Ilona Kämäräinen

Title of thesis: Employee Wellbeing and Engagement through Participation in Physical Activity and Health Programs - A Case Study on a Finnish Company

Date: 6 April 2019

Degree: Bachelor of Science in Economics and Business Administration

Supervisor: Kate Black

Objectives

The main objectives of this research can be divided into four parts. Firstly, the goal is to find out what kind of wellness/fitness programs employees find valuable. Secondly, the research will examine if these programs affect positively on employees' wellness. Thirdly, the general benefits of exercising in terms of employee wellbeing are going to be determined. The fourth and final objective is to find the connections between participating in sports, wellbeing and engagement in work.

Summary

A literature review was conducted to determine the connections between the advantages of physical activity, employee wellbeing and engagement through these two concepts combined. In the light of perceptions made from existing literature, a conceptual framework was created to illustrate the relationship between engagement, wellbeing and physical activity. After this, a qualitative, primary research was delivered to explore the views of employees regarding these three topics and how their own experiences and attitudes may reflect what has been found from the literature.

Conclusions

Physical activity does affect employee wellbeing positively, though it has downsides as well. Active lifestyle has impact on all physical, psychological and social wellbeing of an employee, from which the psychological impact seems to be the major one. The influence of physical activity and company-initiated health programs vary depending on individual characteristics and preferences. Despite the fact that the attitudes towards wellness programs are different among employees, health programs are still seen to have a positive effect on employee engagement.

Key words: Employee engagement, Employee wellbeing, Physical activity, Wellness, Employee engagement, Health programs, Health

Language: English

Grade:

COVER PAGE	
TITLE PAGE	
ABSTRACT	
TABLE OF CONTENTS	

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Background	1
1.2. Research Problem	2
1.3. Research Questions	2
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	3
2.1. General benefits of physical activity for work	4
2.1.1. Physical benefits	4
2.1.2. Psychological benefits	5
2.1.3. Psycho-social and collective benefits	8
2.2. Employee wellbeing and physical activity	9
2.2.1. Wellbeing and health programs in companies - why and how?	9
2.2.2. Measuring wellbeing in companies	13
2.2.3. Barriers for employee wellbeing and participation in physical activity	14
2.2.4. Negative sides of physical activity participation for employees	16
2.4. Employee engagement	18
2.4.1. Importance of employee engagement	18
2.4.2. Benefits and drivers of engagements for employees	19
2.4.3. Benefits of engaged employees for the company	19
2.4.4. The connection between employee engagement and wellbeing	20
2.4.5. Engagement through physical activity	21
2.5. Conceptual framework	23
Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework of employee engagement, wellbeing and physical activity	24
3. METHODOLOGY	25
3.1. Methodological position	25
3.2. Research strategy	26
3.3. Data collection	27
3.3.1. Sampling method	27
3.3.2. Interview plan and structure	27
3.3.2. Limitations	29
3.4. Methods of analysis	30

3.5. Case-study context	31
4. FINDINGS	33
4.1. Employees' interest towards wellbeing and health programs	33
4.2. Company's role for employees' wellbeing	35
4.3. Usefulness of the program	36
4.3.1. Positive benefits.....	36
4.3.2. Critique and negative experiences.....	39
4.4. Social effect of physical activity and health programs in companies	40
5. DISCUSSION.....	42
5.1. To what extent do workplace wellness/fitness programs enhance workers' wellbeing?	42
5.1.1. The importance of company health programs.....	42
5.1.2. Physical activity for employee wellbeing.....	44
5.1.2.1. Physical side	44
5.1.2.2. Psychological side	45
5.2. What role does physical activity have in peoples' engagement in work?	46
6. CONCLUSIONS	49
6.1. Main Findings.....	49
6.1.1. To what extent do workplace wellness/fitness programs enhance workers' wellbeing?	49
6.1.2. What role does physical activity have in peoples' engagement in work?	50
6.2. Implications for International Business	50
6.3. Limitations of the findings.....	50
6.4. Suggestions for Further Research.....	51
REFERENCES.....	53
APPENDICES.....	61
Appendix 1: Template analysis	61
Appendix 2 – Interview questions in the original interviewing language	63
Appendix 3 – Translated interview questions	64

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The wellbeing of employees and their engagement in work plays an important role when it comes to supportive working environment and successful company (Woodruffe, 2006). Wellbeing and coping with stress are present in almost every employees' life so this topic is quite relevant for everybody. Wellbeing both physically and psychologically does not only improve individuals' own life but through higher level of performance it benefits the company as well. These connections are discussed more in the literature review. If there are even more beneficial factors of exercising for wellbeing (and work-life balance) than we realize, then why not find them out? According to Kamatu (2015), not only are there biological benefits for the individuals, but physically active employees do also benefit the organization as a whole. But who is then responsible for employee wellbeing; the employee itself or the company? Multiple sources indicate that without a doubt manager and company do have important role in encouraging to a better lifestyle (Kowalski & Loretto, 2017; Kohll, 2017; Personnel Today, 2012), but it is left for the individuals' responsibility make the action not only for themselves but for the company's sake as well. Though, there are various ways to excite and encourage employees to be active through wellbeing and activity programs. In the literature review the functionality or importance of the programs will be investigated.

Additional dimension for the entirety of wellbeing would be engagement. Shuck and Reio have found out that more engaged employees (in a group) have better psychological wellbeing and personal accomplishments. However, Remo (2012) interestingly found out through her research that supportive company atmosphere did not increase the engagement level of the employees participating the study. Neither did the fringe benefits, according to the survey Steyn (2010). These findings create an interesting contrast since one would think encouraging to sports would be part of these both aspects and beneficial for engagement.

1.2. Research Problem

Firstly, I want to examine more thoroughly what benefits there are and to what extent do sports improve the wellbeing of a worker. Secondly, I would like to know if the health programs of companies are helpful and if so, what kind. Thirdly, I will study whether sports is a factor affecting positively to employee engagement.

In one sentence: Is sports and company-oriented incentives for exercising beneficial for employees' wellbeing?

1.3. Research Questions

1. To what extent do workplace wellness/fitness programs enhance workers' wellbeing?
2. What role does physical activity have in peoples' engagement in work?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The benefits of physical activity have been known for a long time and new findings are made all the time through the development of technology and research methodology. This literature review consists of a thorough look on the already existing information and data related to physical activity or sports participation and how it affects the wellbeing and working ability of employees. Physical inactivity is globally problematic issue that causes morbidity and mortality, and is also an economic burden (Ding et al., 2016). Hence, it is important to pay attention to the opportunities and possibilities physical activity may offer for employee wellbeing and engagement. As Crabtree (2005) states, the company might not have a great power on peoples' individual lives and the choices they make, but the control is more significant in the workplace. Therefore, companies can, by offering healthy and supportive work environment, decrease the risk for diseases and health risks in their own way. According to Herrick (2009) paying attention to health and improving physical activity for corporate social responsibility has a 'brand value' in today's business world. Herrick also mentioned that in 2004 the Global Strategy of WHO had introduced the possible opportunity private sector would have in reducing deaths and diseases worldwide through promoting health. When it comes to economic burden, it is clear that healthier employees need fewer medical services and using of insurances that saves money of companies and the state.

In terms of Human Resources, the professionals and managers are continuously seeking for new methods to enhance the wellbeing and performance of employees. One important concept that has been and is increasingly trending is employee engagement. How employees feel connected to their work is highly linked to overall wellbeing in the job and also is an improving factor for performance. In fact, Shuk and Reio (2013) claim that poor engagement has decreasing effect for employee wellbeing and engagement. Therefore, this literature review will also examine what is the role of physical activity for wellbeing and how important wellbeing is for engagement and vice versa.

Literature review will also suggest some downsides related to wellbeing actions and company-initiated health programs. There exists a risk of employer using control over

the employee through. Wolters Kluwer website (2019) suggests that employer may regulate the behavior of employees during the work-time but off-duty actions are limited. However, the health programs of companies often require people to commit and invest also their own time to reach better health. Is this good for the employee or only employer's way to have control over peoples' lives? Further investigation of the 'dark side' of the acts for wellbeing and health programs will follow later in the literature review.

The literature review chapter will initially explore general benefits and downsides of wellbeing and then their implications for work life and how can they be embraced by both employee and employer. After continuing with possible barriers and negative effects of physical activity participation, I will finally connect everything for engagement aspect. In the end, the goal is to find linkages between these aspects and finally tie these areas up with a conceptual framework related to this research topic. Throughout the literature review, findings and theories will be approached with critical engagement. This means that at all times, the statements and assumptions are made with slight reserve and critical analyzing style since, after all, this literature review has been combined from other authors' work.

2.1. General benefits of physical activity for work

2.1.1. Physical benefits

It is common knowledge that physical exercise in general is good for the physique of people and health of the body. A thorough study in Finland by Hassmén et al. (2000) measured and compared the wellbeing of participants who did regular exercise and of those who did not, and the results indicated better health and fitness for the frequent movers. Wellbeing is a comprehensive issue including strong psychological side as well and therefore, after the physical side, the psychological aspects will be discussed in their own section. While this is fairly vague and obvious statement, World Health Organization - Regional Office For Europe (n.d.) states the physical benefits of exercising more precisely: exercising reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis and diabetes as well as helps with preventing obesity and overweight.

Another, not so strictly derived positive side, is that physical activity controls and prevents the participation in unhealthy behavior that would have disadvantages for physical health such as smoking, drinking alcohol and having an unhealthy diet.

An active lifestyle does not only have positive connection for individual health, but it is also beneficial for companies in many ways; other than benefits due to physical activity will be discussed later in this literature review. Maintaining healthy lifestyle will keep employees employable for longer. This of course saves the costs of the companies due to reduced medical bills and sick leave payments but in addition it affects individuals themselves through increased energy levels and stronger musculoskeletal systems (Sjörger, 2006) that help people cope with longer periods of sitting or with physically demanding jobs. Thus, maintaining an active lifestyle does not only have positive connection for individual health, but it is also beneficial for companies through these ways. However, it needs to be mentioned that all of the benefits and positive outcomes mentioned above may not emerge for everyone. It depends on individual and bodily differences as well as many other things, of how physical activity really affects a person.

But how much should we exercise and what type of physical activity should it be? It could be determined through 'dose-response relationship' (Taylor et al., 2015). This means that the intensity, type, duration and frequency of physical activity together affect the amount of achieved health benefits. Of course, according to the authors, there is literature discussing what is the right amount in different situations and especially for tackling specific diseases. Despite that, at least moderate level of physical activity is highly recommended and good for almost everyone. Because of the differentiation of right level of activity for each individual, it might be challenging for companies to specify how or with what extent employees should be encouraged to be physically active.

2.1.2. Psychological benefits

Not only is participation in sports good for physical health and wellbeing body, but it has been found to improve the psychological wellbeing as well. For example, Stubbe et al. (2007) discovered that active people are happier and more satisfied with their lives than less or not active people. Happiness, however, is not the only psychological advantage exercising could cause.

Through the survey on Finnish people, Hassmén et.al. (2000) found out great amount of psychological benefits gained from physical exercise in addition to the physical benefits mentioned above. The findings show that the people who exercised frequently had less depression, cynical distrust, suppressed anger and perceived stress compared to people who did not exercise as frequently. Moreover, the more active participants felt more sense of coherence and socially integrated. The results rely mainly on the fact of how frequently the participants exercised. In addition, the findings were drawn from the self-reports from individuals whose training methods were different. This is why the results can provide views on the benefits of the quantity of physical activity, but it does not provide information about the quality or type of the exercising. Finally, it could also be argued that naturally different cultures represent differing psychological ways of thinking, so there might be slight differences between cultures when determining gained benefits.

Despite the clear psychological benefits, there are differences in how certain activities and programs have an impact on individuals and how the type of measurement can have an impact on the results. Stubbe et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal research on exercise participation and wellbeing by comparing the results of twins from ages 18 to 65. The setting creates an interesting frame of comparison. However, it can be argued that the participants of the same environment or a shared genetic background would produce similar survey answers unlike people in general. In a previous study they proved that the individual differences in life satisfaction can be explained partly by genetic factors. Researches that focus on the genetics of people may produce different results than researches done by sending questionnaires to participants. The latter way is more superficial. This explains why the method of a research can have a surprisingly great effect on the results. The limitation here is that we do not know which research method or way to analyze is the most appropriate to use in this context. Moreover, while there is already limited amount of studies made specifically from the

topic of this thesis, the ones existing are likely to present different research styles. Therefore, comparing them with each other and drawing comprehensive conclusions is more difficult.

There can be other aspects that might affect the measured results regarding gained happiness through physical activity. Huang and Humphreys (2012) found in their study that economic, environmental and cultural differences can in fact make a difference, when they compared their own results in the US to the results of a similar study made in UK. They state that personal characteristics such as gender, age, education, income, marital and employment status, races might cause limitations for physical activity. To conclude, results from measuring happiness and other psychological aspects is dependent on multiple variables and individuals themselves, though some general analysis can be made. Hassmén et al. (2000) confronted similar results; they used a questionnaire to measure both physical and psychological benefits of exercising for people representing different age groups. To no surprise, in general the younger participants felt their health to be better than the older people, but more interestingly, so did women compared with men. The gender differences in the researches around this topic are often presented in the literature. This raises a problem that might be important when determining the health benefits of exercising; the independent differences between individuals, for example gender and age.

To conclude, results from measuring happiness and other mental aspects are dependent on multiple variables and individuals themselves, though some general analysis on the research results can be made. This will be helpful when forming new health programs for companies, since there exists underlying data to rely on when matching a company and its employees with a program. However, there should always be a thorough investigation on company's own needs and targets to find the best solution possible.

“We also develop evidence that the relationship between participation in physical activity and happiness relates to the effect of physical activity on health.” - Huang H. & Humphreys, B.R. (2012)

Especially the psychological and social benefits of physical activity are found to be important for employee engagement and sense of belonging and care at work. These aspects will be discussed more in detail later in the literature review, specifically in the section 2.4.5.

2.1.3. Psycho-social and collective benefits

Going more deeply into the causes and effects, there is supportive evidence that the type of physical activity does matter. Downward and Rasciute (2011) found out that the form of sport participation is related to level of happiness gained from it and, in addition, sports that required social interaction lead to increased probability for higher happiness level. This is, of course, a personality issue and depends on personal preferences but it could be derived that doing sports with friends results in higher level of happiness than alone, especially if it is a sport that an individual has found enjoyable. Team and other sports that require communication with other people would be considered to have social interaction in them whereas for example running itself does not involve such interaction. In the study Downward and Rasciute classify sports as either social or non-social sports where the first would be a team sport or such that has a clear component like in racquet sports. However, they state this as a limited way to classify sports since one could say that kicking a ball alone would be 'playing football'. Another problem can emerge if an individual is participating team sports but is not very excited about it. This person can create negative atmosphere that can have an impact on other participants, and in the worst case, affect negatively to social relationships of employees. Furthermore, in the survey it was not mentioned which social sport the respondent had been participating in.

Doing physical activity in a group or participating in sporting events increases opportunities for creating networks and engaging oneself socially. In addition, in societies and even at workplaces, it may help people representing different ethnicity, age groups, class or status groups to connect better with each other (Tonts, 2005). This is useful not only for the happiness of employees at work but also for the company itself - increased social capital and improved co-worker relationships enhance employee wellbeing. Better mental wellbeing of employees and thus improved

performance are not the only ways for a company to benefit from physically active workers; major cost savings are also made. Through better physique, workers suffer less from detrimental illnesses such as musculoskeletal and chronic diseases hence the employer avoids medical bills.

2.2. Employee wellbeing and physical activity

2.2.1. Wellbeing and health programs in companies - why and how?

Since it has been stated why and how physical activity could improve individuals' personal and working lives, it would be logical to examine the means to reach the benefits. This might be done through wellbeing and wellness programs that organizations offer for employees in order to improve their health, performance and engagement as well as simultaneously benefit the company financially and improve the image as an employer. There are various ways and methods to implement this kind of wellness programs; for example, they can be created to improve physical or psychological health, measure current wellbeing or help with diet or sleep. The target is to offer employees the ability to reach comprehensive wellbeing.

In Finland, using company wellness programs and health initiatives may be in a relatively good position, at least among the other European countries. Aittasalo and Livson (2016) conducted a survey with HEPA (health-enhancing physical activity) Europe members studying the program implementations in these 20 countries. Finland seemed to be one of the most active promoters since it was the only one having a proper data collection and reporting system for implementations and one of the countries having financial incentives for employees. There are many ways to increase health-enhancing physical activity but most common incentives for promotion were organizing sport related events, giving financial help and providing facilities for exercising. It needs to be stated that even though the results might provide a sight on the Finnish health promotion in companies, there were only 40 people participating in this study from which only two were from Finland. Moreover, because Finland as a welfare state takes relatively good care of its population in general, it probably is more

progressive with company health promotion as well compared to many other countries. Thus, the results can hardly be generalized or said to be true in every Finnish company.

Vilen (2011) states three rationales on why Finnish companies want to improve or increase the amount and quality of employee wellness services. The first one is responsibility sharing rationale that defines the employee health promotion to be the whole society's responsibility, not only company's; the society encourages organizations to enhance wellness services since it simultaneously helps with the burden of health care that Finland as a society has. The second one is a service modernization rationale which resembles "the efficient, administratively easy and technologically advanced services" (Vilen, 2011) and the last one an employee empowerment rationale. This rationale relies on social exchange theory in which it is important to invest in both wellness services and socially healthy workplaces. Cherry (2018) explains it simply: according to this theory developed by George Homans, the aim is to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs and risks. Especially the final reason is well represented throughout the literature regarding employee wellbeing programs. Contrastingly, the author found a fourth underlying dimension that showed employers' satisfied attitude towards already existing wellbeing programs which indicates negative willingness for change in that area. However, for the most part it can be said that health programs are concerned as a positive addition for employee wellbeing.

Human Resource professionals around the world are having more and more strategies for company wellness initiatives (Society For Human Resource Management, 2016). This, the sense of responsibility of the workplace and surrounding community, would fit into both first and second rationales found by Vilen. In short, companies create strategies that work for the company in question. Because individuals and working customs are different in every company, the strategies are as well. Responsibility sharing represents company values and care for the employees. Then again service modernization might be more focused on the functionality and efficiency of the services. Vilen (2011) argues that both of these rationales "measure wellness services in terms of financial performance indicators--". Moreover, it is important for the employee wellbeing to feel supported and taken care of in the workplace.

It is beneficial for both employee and the company if the employer provides health programs or incentives. First of all, there are financial benefits that interest companies. For the company, the major cost savings may be decrease in health care costs and decrease in unplanned absences. Moreover, increased work productivity and performance due to improved employee wellbeing, can lead to financial gains. (Mills et al. 2007). Cost saving can derive from fewer absences or increased productivity or simply the decreased health care costs (Society For Human Resource Management, 2016; Brinkley et al., 2017 & Hudson, 2016). With this being said, it is likely for the company to have economic benefits from activating employees, whether financial gains were the prior underlying motive for offering health programs or not.

The perceptions of Joubert and de Beer (2010) and Hudson (2016) were in line with the latter point; team sport activities organized by the company can have a positive impact on the relationships between employees and increase trust and respect within the work groups. However, it could be possible to reach the similar benefits by participating sports as a team even if the company was not the one organizing it. The participants of the study by Joubert de Beer (2010) felt that organizational team sport activities would enhance communication and help creating friendly atmosphere in the workplace. For the mental health of individuals, it is important to feel comfortable and safe among other co-workers. However, some people might not enjoy group activities which should be remembered when planning them for the employees. At least, participation in the programs shall not be mandatory and everything should be done by workers' own will. Then again, this could be one of the factors preventing the company to put out incentives in the first place - if they think employees will not participate in the programs in the first place, it is not very motivating for the employer to put effort in offering the programs at all.

The third rationale of employee empowerment consist of comprehensive wellbeing. Physical wellness from exercising is only one part of wellbeing among the employees. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (n.d.) puts emphasis on social and society-related factors. For example, the feeling of being valued, ability to use one's strengths, open and supportive co-workers and good communications in the workplace are also affecting employee wellbeing. There are also findings about individuals' self-efficacy, motivation, competence (Brinkley et.al, 2017). For many of these aspects, physical

activity and workplace incentives for team sports or physical activity can have a positive effect. And as a second company benefit; healthy, happy and satisfied employees perform better.

The entirety of all these psychological and physical factors is complex. Brinkley et.al (2017) suggest that wellness interventions should use participatory approach that would highlight autonomy, competence, relatedness and support in the working environment. They argue that sports and training could be useful to gain the more comprehensive level of employee wellbeing and that getting people to participate in activities would improve both psychological and physical wellbeing. It is still only one medium for reaching these targets and there are many other ways to use and to improve wellbeing besides physical activity.

In addition, perceptions of Pescud et al. (2015) clarify possible ways on how to find the right kind of wellness program for specific company. Their study suggests that there are three factors through which employers determine the need for workplace health programs. Firstly, it is dependent on how the employer conceptualizes the health and wellbeing at work. Secondly, how employer sees the condition of the employees and the extent to which is important for the job. And finally, the employer's own beliefs on what is company's role for health improvement. Even though these findings are most applicable for Australian companies, where this study was conducted, it is also useful for universal implementation since health promotion and programs are internationally a growing trend. Given the internationality aspect, in the study it is stated that for example, how employers personally feel concerned for the health of employees is dependent on the size of the company. In smaller companies, employers tend to care more personally about the wellbeing. Contrastingly, it is more likely that there are organized health programs in bigger companies. After stating the core ideas in health programs and possible measuring differences, it can be said that many of the implications present the same grounding idea and characteristics. Same type of incentives usually are applicable in most of the companies and often the target is in comprehensive wellbeing, which again bring this chapter together. Conveniently, virginpulse.com portrays corporate wellness programs to be "-- designed to support and encourage a holistic approach to employee wellbeing by creating an organizational culture of health".

Though there can be similarities between the health programs, the importance of tailoring and adjusting them has more support; VirginPulse is a company that creates personalized wellbeing programs for companies by first determining their needs and improvement areas. Many companies have benefited from their services that could have included assistance with for example activity, sleep, nutrition, cognition, social relationships (virginpulse.com). A case in point would be a collaboration that VirginPulse had with a company called Morton Salt – they launched their own program called Dash which has a goal to improve the happiness of employees and their health and at the same time make the company more successful by engaging and empowering their employees.

As a conclusion it can be said that company initiatives for employee health and wellbeing are considered as highly beneficial. Physical activity is a fundamental part of wellbeing and it has an impact on physical, mental and social aspects of human health.

2.2.2. Measuring wellbeing in companies

Determining the benefits of physical activity is of course somewhat different with companies' employees and people in general. This is because not only do jobs require different amounts of sitting, physical activity and time from the day, but also the employees are individuals with different needs, behaviors and exercising habits. Thus, research results on one company might be different than on the other. However, according to Sunlife Financial (2013) there are common initiative steps that a company can make to improve wellbeing among the employees that are "--conducting needs assessments, evaluating wellness programs on an ongoing basis, and recording the outcomes of wellness components in the workplace." All these steps indicate what seems to be highly relevant for program design, and that is to personalize the program to be suitable for the company in question.

What Robertson (2005) states could be applicable for both physical and psychological measurements of wellbeing in companies. He suggests that especially for understanding psychological wellbeing, it is crucial to systematically track employees'

own feelings and views over a sufficiently long time period so that there would be enough data to draw conclusions. The answers to questions that could be affected by mood can vary even in one day. For example, questions about confidence and energy levels at work can be such type of questions.

Despite the possible result-affecting factors in measuring employee wellbeing, it is still useful and beneficial to keep record and collect data about the company health. As Sjörgen (2006) states, controlling the physical activity and reporting the effects helps with tracking the effectiveness and development of the health programs. In addition, it could be useful for employees to see their previous results in programs if they take part on similar projects in the future.

2.2.3. Barriers for employee wellbeing and participation in physical activity

Not only are there problems in having or creating company incentives for wellbeing and physical activity but there can also be various barriers that prevent employees' participation on physical activity or company-initiated programs. Brinkley et.al. (2017) present following; participating in physical activity, in this case team sport activities in the workplace, is affected by environmental, societal, organizational as well as interlinking intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. Even though the study focused on the team sport activities in the workplace, the results could work as indicational guidelines for improving the employee participation in physical activities. It is stated that also management, organizational structure and culture may play an important role in health initiative implementations if prevalent changes are wanted. For example, Aittasalo and Livson (2016) mention that in an organization unstable work-life balance of employees and lack of systematical support create obstacles for participation in physical activity. It could be that these difficulties could be eased through exercising so in the beginning it is valuable to have support and flexible attitude from the workplace or employer. Often it is the starting and changing one's lifestyle that might be difficult for people.

One research conducted by Cooper and Barton (2016) was focused on physical activity and mental wellbeing as well as what are the incentives and barriers for being

active in the workplace, in this case a University in the United Kingdom. The perceptions were that the most significant barriers for workplace physical activity were time limitations of the employees and facility expenses. Again, it is difficult to generalize facts based on one survey that was done in one country and one workplace. The same problem appears with many other references – there are many researches done but they rarely are exactly perfect fit for this literature review or then they might not be applicable for Finnish or International perspective. In the end, Cooper and Barton stated that the results correlate with what is already known about the connections between exercising and wellbeing – that findings are similar to general population. However, supporting the argument of Aittasalo and Livson, they found that a firm and well-planned strategy for employee health in this particular university will be needed - which may well be the case in most companies thinking about wellness strategies. The overall assertion was that a high level of physical activity does have a relationship with high wellbeing and a low level of physical activity correlates with low wellbeing among the employees.

Stated barriers so far have been mainly about individual differences in personal lives of people but sometimes it might be more dependent on community and social aspects rather than individual characteristics. Tonts (2005) found that in a society people can be in unequal position or have fundamental disadvantages for participating in certain physical activities or sport events. The study was conducted in a city community, but it presents some aspects that could be applicable for workplace societies. Results indicate unfortunately that financial capital, ethnicity, gender, or even that a person has not been physically active before, affect negatively in the participation. However, in an organizational environment, these kinds of barriers could be evaded through engaging and collectively supportive health initiatives provided by the company,

In addition to these affecting factors, also financial barriers either of the company or an employee might prevent the ability of participation in health promotion activities. Moreover, according to Aittasalo and Livson (2016), even more barriers for health program implementations could be the uncertainty of cost-benefit efficiency and lack human resources and systematic support to organize the arrangements. These perceptions were found through the study on HEPA implementations but would seem appropriate for common understanding of the issues. Finally, the existence of personal

barriers of employees, such as disinterest in health promotion, is another difficulty to tackle with. Besides indifference, also time limitations, facility expenses (Cooper & Barton, 2016), or physical constraints can be considered as personal barriers.

The study that delivered these results was focused on physical activity and mental wellbeing as well as what are the incentives and barriers for being active in the workplace, in this case in a University in the United Kingdom. The perceptions were that the most significant barriers for workplace physical activity were time limitations of the employees and facility expenses. In the end, they stated that the results correlate with what is already known about the connections between exercising and wellbeing – that findings are similar to general population which means it could be applied in other situations and countries.

2.2.4. Negative sides of physical activity participation for employees

Physical exercise is often considered only as a positive health enhancing factor, although it may also have disadvantages if not done in right dimensions. Paton (2016) argues the downsides of possible over-performing due to people trying to achieve health results too intensively or too fast, causing themselves injuries or other health damages. In addition to the physiological downsides of taking exercising too far, it can also be harmful in a psychological way. People can pressure themselves and demand too much in terms of personal physical activity and when the targets are not possible to reach due to for example ongoing rush at work, it might be mentally difficult to accept and cope with.

Rush and stress will inevitably affect negatively to competence of employees when they are tired at work and worrying about other things than work itself. Being in a pressured state of mind could reduce the level of engagement in the long run. Just like Halkos and Bousinakis (2015) had found through their study, stress overlapping employees' personal lives affect negatively on productivity and moreover, conveniently for this literature review, they found that activity increases productivity for individuals so inactivity would cause an opposite outcome. These factors affecting employee wellbeing and mental health make it detrimental for the whole company. According to

what was stated in the beginning of this literature review, in the future it could be the wellbeing and engaged workforce that makes a company competitive and this is why not stressing too much about sports is important for employees.

Additionally, Brinkley et al. (2017) state that unhealthy competition in sports between co-workers might prevent people from participating in physical activity in a work community. This same factor could also develop social and psychological problems within the workforce after starting the activeness which might result in weakened performance. Although team sports and physical activity done in a work group is often found to improve social connections and bonding, Tonts (2005) contrastingly argues the social capital gained from sport to be often fragile and cause social marginality and exclusion in some cases.

There may also be downsides with the company wellness initiatives. Firstly, incentives for healthier life need to be offered sensibly and not in a way that would seem to be done only for benefiting the company. As Albrecht (2017) mentions, it may not be good in the long run to tell employees to improve their health or tell them to participate programs just for the financial gains of the company. Additionally, through these wellbeing and health programs a company might try to gain greater control over its employees.

Secondly, the possibility for wellness programs to fail or to have no effect exists. Frakt and Carroll (2014) argue that if not designed well, the health incentive may be useless. Each company has its own targets and individuals working so it would make sense to tailor the program respecting these facts.

Thirdly, it is a concern what information people can give for the health analyses since there is always the risk of medical or otherwise sensitive data to leak. Weiner (2015) brings up the example of StayWell Company whose information of over 14 000 wellness program participants was hacked. This kind of risk is bad itself but also knowing that something similar might happen either for this company or other wellness program providers, prevents people from participating in them or giving completely truthful and thorough information of themselves. Whereas employees are reluctant to

take part in health incentives, there are limited opportunities for wellbeing improvement.

2.4. Employee engagement

2.4.1. Importance of employee engagement

As the literature has shown, wellbeing is not only exercising, sleeping well and having a healthy diet. A major part of it all comes from social factors and sense of belonging. For this matter engaging employees has become increasingly important during recent years when HR professionals have realized the impact engagement can have in employee wellbeing. There are many ways to engage people, but in this section, the focus will be specifically in physical activity.

As a concept, employee engagement, has been trendy and usual concern for business practitioners for the past few years, even though some years ago there was not that much research done yet (Remo, 2012). Now that engagement has become more and more essential part of Human Resources, the amount of information and studies have grown. However, there is still a need for further analysis to understand the concept completely and be able to adapt it in a most efficient way. When there is large number of skilled employees and highly professional strategies that give companies competence, companies need energetic and dedicated workers to reach the optimal performance (Bakker & Leiter, 2010; Robinson et al., 2004). Engaged and motivated employees could be the next core competence to set a business aside from many other competitors (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

Why is it that only recently we have realized the importance and meaning employee engagement has? It could well be the diversity of the term and slight difficulty to undertint the entirety. Virginpulse.com (n.d.) presents employee engagement as a more complex concept than one would think; there is not a one way to describe engagement because it is formed differently by every company's and that company's employees' own needs. Over the past decade researchers have been trying to fit the concept into one box, even though doing so does not provide that useful framework (Bakker et al., 2008). The targeted level of engagement depends on the goals and

customs of a company. It is stated that the company first needs to know for what it aims towards before implementing any engagement methods. Virginpulse.com argues, that an engagement can be reached through empowerment, personal balance and wellbeing as well as work in a thriving workplace culture.

There are great amounts of benefits in employee engagement for the company and for the employees but there are also collective benefits that combine these two entities. Lovelace (2015) presents that in the changing circumstances and developing work environment it is easier to cope for engaged employees. Together engaged workforce form a culturally strong company. However, they conclude that too high level of engagement can actually cause trouble with adapting to new situations.

2.4.2. Benefits and drivers of engagements for employees

For individuals the main drivers for employee engagement may be feeling valued and involved (Robinson et al., 2004). These are factors are both cause and effect for taking action for employee engagement. Engagement helps workers to give the best individual performance possible (Bhaskara & Gustomo, 2015) and this feeling of being able to express oneself in the job gives the employee the possibility to do this. This can then again lead to both personal and professional development. Robinson et.al. (2004) define the “feeling of being valued and involved” as a multidimensional aspect that for example involves good communication, pay, benefits, management etc. Overall, it can be said that an employee who is engaged feels happy and satisfied in the job which reflects to a happy life and wellbeing in general.

2.4.3. Benefits of engaged employees for the company

Evidence shows that organizational benefits of engaged employees could improve the involvement and loyalty of the personnel and reduce the risk of workers leaving the company as easily (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In addition, due to improvement in employee engagement, the performance will arguably improve as well. As Arisandi and Chaerudin (2015) support, investing in human resources and in this case to

engagement activities is profitable since it works as one of the main drivers of a company. It creates a better employer image when the reputation is that it cares for its employees and values their happiness. It could also be helpful in recruitment process if job seekers know that there will be effort for employee engagement and satisfaction – it will make the company look good among other companies and increase the likelihood of talented people applying for the positions. They also suggest using a relevant engagement theory to reach the optimal outcome. Moreover, like Fasary and Gustomo (2016) state, employee engagement is a fundamental part of human resources and it is linked to many parts of it.

2.4.4. The connection between employee engagement and wellbeing

As stated above, engagement is highly related to wellbeing through the mental benefits it causes. For example, it is important for human to feel motivated and excited in the workplace and be a part of community in which wellbeing is important. Not only is it important for individual psychological health but also it is beneficial for the company. In many theoretical frameworks of employee engagement, health and wellbeing are usually one part among the other factors. They are part of a bigger picture, but if an organization identifies health related problems with their employees carefully, investing in improvement of work engagement might be a proactive way to combat health problems and the resulting productivity loss (Remo, 2012).

For example, some insights on this argument provides a study conducted in Canada that was focusing on the employer perspectives. It generalized the most common challenges for employee health. Three most common risks were sedentary lifestyle, work-related stress and obesity. To tackle these problems, many of the companies had wellness initiatives that were more focused on the employee engagement and organizational culture - the psychological and social aspects. Even though exercise programs would enhance the wellbeing even more, initiatives for engagement and working environment are also important for holistic wellness. This seems to create a connection between employee engagement and employee wellbeing (Sun Life Financial, 2013).

A case in point would be a research that showed correlation between high engagement and high level of psychological well-being and accomplishment (Shuk & Reio, 2014). However, according to Arisandi and Chaerudin (2015), company initiatives for health and wellbeing were seen as valuable additions in terms of employee engagement but not the most important ones. The takeaway is that many of the factors affecting the wellbeing of the employees are also more or less engaging factors in terms of workplace and job.

2.4.5. Engagement through physical activity

Engagement can be reached through many ways and physical activity or exercising could be one of the simplest aids for it. One can improve own mood by exercising and thus make it easier to be engaged but also company and work community plays a big role through collective concern and grouping.

The engagement through physical activity can be divided into two parts: one being the self-initiated and the other being the company-initiated physical activity. For example, this could be supported by Bakker et al. (2008), as they state personal and job resources to be important factors for creating work engagement. This might be valid regarding the physical activity aspect in engagement; being unprompted for healthy and active lifestyle is likely to positively affect being engaged at work, as would the company incentives affect. After all, being active in general does have a positive impact on reciprocity and cognitive skills that are then again positively connected to employee engagement (Taylor et al, 2015).

Another way to scrutinize the link between engagement and physical activity is to take another perspective on the arrangement. Since physical health is one part of wellbeing and while engagement and wellbeing have similar affecting factors, it can thus be concluded that physical activity, especially work-related or initiated activity, could be part of employee engagement. And while physical activity is part of holistic wellbeing, engagement and physical activity both indirectly are each other's cause and effect for this matter.

Moreover, especially the company initiatives affect the job satisfaction and that for older workforce it becomes increasingly important to have wellness initiatives provided by workplace. People of middle-age and older are more likely to have chronic health problems and thus value health and wellbeing initiatives more highly. According to Society For Human Resource Management (2016), the Human Resources professionals consider wellness initiatives to have an improving effect on the overall engagement level of the employees. Ideally, engagement would hence make a bigger proportion of workforce to interact more closely with the wellbeing programs and improve their health.

It can be derived from the existing information that a wellbeing employee is an engaged employee. Physical activity is part of wellbeing and for example social sides of physical activity and health/sport programs of companies enhance engagement since in many of the engagement theories and/or models seem to frame social support and communication as a great factor (Putri & Welly, 2014; Arisandi & Chaerudin, 2015). These aspects might be improved through sport events and programs that co-workers take part in together. However, the frameworks indicate that most important factors for employee engagement are, besides interpersonal aspects, the extent to which employees feel the job being fitted for them, how good is the management and what are the opportunities in career development.

Even though the research by Sjögren (2006) showed that physical activity programs for employees had more powerful impact on people's physical than psychological functioning, and that physical factors were more important for the work ability of the participants, it turned out that actually the positive psychological changes that program had caused for the participants were more important for maintaining the subjective well-being.

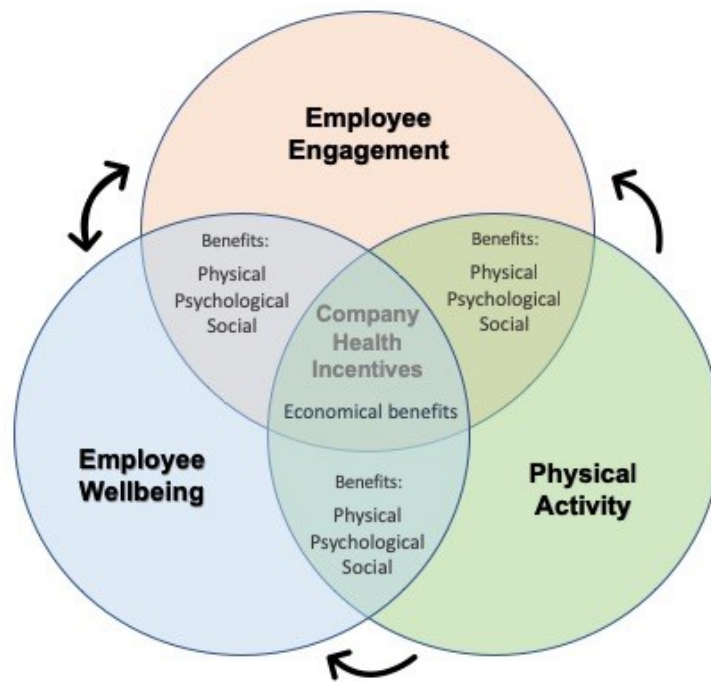
Knowing this, with respect to improving employee engagement in companies, employers and Human Resources professionals can use sport events and health programs as a tool to form and approach engagement strategies. A case in point would be the company presented in the article by Paton (2016) that used sport events as an engagement tool, when employee health or wellbeing was not even the main target of the incentive. The target was to improve organizational culture, team bonding and

building, as well as corporate social responsibility. All of these present psychosocial factors in the engagement concept which seem to have a surprisingly great value in this matter.

2.5. Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework resembles the connections found through literature review. The focus points of this thesis are employee wellbeing, engagement and physical activity which are bolded in the framework. Physical activity has been considered to be a means to form and reach both these aspects and this framework aims to show how physical activity is linked to wellbeing and engagement. Whereas physical activity is a means for these two concepts, both of them are a part of each other. This means that employee wellbeing is important part of engagement and vice versa. In the middle are company health incentives that work as an enhancing factor for all of these three main areas. In addition, economic benefits are stated there since all three main areas as well as company health incentives are causes for it. The three remaining fields that state physical, psychological, and social benefits are between the main fields since bigger areas surrounding them are either causes of effects for these individual benefits. In conclusion, many of the parts in wellbeing and engagement consist of similar factors, physical activity being a remarkable and tight factor in the concept. Moreover, engagement and wellbeing are also tightly linked to each other and more or less conditions for one another.

Figure 1 – Conceptual Framework of employee engagement, wellbeing and physical activity



3. METHODOLOGY

Following section explains the collection of primary data that is related to the topic of this thesis. The focus is on the employees of a Finnish company that has been offering a health program for its employees. Relying on the definition PressAcademia (2018) provides, would focusing this way on a specific company and program make this primary research a case study. Here in this case it is FirstBeat, a measurement for heartrate intervals in which participants wear heartrate sensors for three days. The idea would be to have two regular week days and one weekend day during that three-day-period. Even though it is not strictly about physical activity or sports, it is highly connected to employee health and wellbeing.

3.1. Methodological position

Through the literature review it has come clear that wellbeing, need for encouragement for physical activity or need for actual health programs in order to feel engaged at work are all dependent on the natural differences between individuals. This is one of the reasons why qualitative research method was better fit for the purpose. The approach was to explore employees' personal views on the health program used in the company and therefore the chosen method was to follow qualitative method and do interviews. Through semi- structured interviews, if delivered well, it might be easier to get personalized answers that are more in depth. This specific style gives the interviewee more space to elaborate on open-ended questions and tell more; the atmosphere was therefore aimed to be relaxed during the interviews. It can be one of the pitfalls of quantitative research that when people answer to questionnaires, they might not read the question carefully or even be interested in the topic. This was something that was meant to be avoided through interviews.

The purpose of this primary research was therefore to use inductive research method. This means that first employees' attitudes and points of view were investigated through interviews. After this, it was explored whether the findings seem to match with or be in line with the existing literature and theories. Openness for new findings and connections that might not have been discussed in the literature review was

maintained throughout the process because often in inductive research some new theories may be developed (Hyde, 2000).

Seven qualitative interviews were conducted with Finnish employees working in a Finnish, medium sized consulting company. The approximate age group of the sample was middle aged. Five of these were done via Skype. The best option would have been to do interviews face-to-face but due to the nature of the work and after discussions with the HR manager of the company, the second-best option was to do them through Skype. The other two interviews were made via mobile phone.

3.2. Research strategy

The major affecting factors behind the strategy for primary research are the topic itself and the literature review. Before doing research on existing literature, there were three research questions defined that also worked as an inspiration for primary research:

- 1. To what extent do workplace wellness/fitness programs enhance workers' wellness?*
- 2. What role do sports have in peoples' wellbeing and engagement in work?*

Research questions and the thesis topic were in more important role when trying to find a suitable primary research method. The need for qualitative data as well as author's own interest lead to a decision for making qualitative research and using interviews as a research method. Once the method was decided, the next step was to find participants for the interviews. At this point, what was learned from the literature review became important – a company with a wellbeing or health program would be the most suitable one to serve the purpose for this thesis. After finding a fitting company, the next step was to look for the people willing to participate in the interviews. The interviews would be individual and timed so that the time and date would be suitable for employees' schedules.

Initial idea was to have the major questions and start doing interviews as soon as possible – at the same time with the ongoing literature review. The reason for this would be the possibility to have inspiration for both of the sections from each other.

After completing the interviews, they would be themed and coded for the template analysis.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Sampling method

Planning the interviews started months before actual interview situations since there was a need to find a company that had a health program and was interested in participating. Once a suitable company had been found and the topic as well as participation in the interviews seemed interesting, the initial participation request was sent to some employees by the HR manager. After receiving positive answers from people, I contacted them personally, explained the case more thoroughly and planned a suitable interview time for each participant.

3.3.2. Interview plan and structure

All five skype conversations were screen recorded in the application itself whereas the two phone calls recorded with call recorder application. According to Jamshed (2014) taking only written notes during the interview might result in unreliable findings if interviewer misses some points. The working language in this stage was Finnish since speaking with native language makes it easier for interviewees to express their feelings.

Semi-structured interview had six major questions in total that were similar in every interview. How the questions were asked, was dependent on the person, situation and the medium used for interviews, so there have been slight differences in the choice of words. In some cases, respondents had answered some of the questions with their earlier answers which had an impact on the sequence and the flow of questions. Sometimes this inspired respondents to move with their elaboration into their own direction which is an advantage of semi-structured interview and open-ended questions. However, in the end the core delivery was always the same. Throughout the interviews, the FirstBeat measurement was always on the background, if not the questions were specifically about it.

Opnenakker (2006) states many advantages of interviewing method; one of the major advantages of face-to-face interviews to be the social cues such as body language which might give additional information for the interviewee. Moreover, there is no time delay in face-to-face interviewing which results in more spontaneous and perhaps truthful react from both interviewer and interviewee. Recording of the interview gives the possibility to go back and replay the answers and in this method the interviewer can create good ambiance for the interview. Two of the interviews were done via mobile phone calls which was the second-best option. It only lacks the advantage of receiving social cues and possibility for affecting the ambiance except from the tone of voice. In addition, since Skype interview was a virtual face-to-face interview, both of these methods were good for the busy workers; finding time for an interview through phone or webcam is much easier than arranging a real-life meeting.

The first question looked on the reasons for participating the company health program or increasing the amount of physical activity. Often some examples were given, for example whether participants had had an active childhood or that they were seeking better health or reaching for some goals related to health or physical performance. There was only one interviewee who had not yet participated in the program but was excited about it and willing to participate in it in the future. Otherwise, the participants were purposely searched from the crowd who had experience from FirstBeat.

The second question asked about how big of a role had either the employer or the company has had for the individual's wellbeing. More specifically; have these had an impact on level of physical activity or an encouraging effect to participate in FirstBeat. Another example used for this question was suggesting the effect of co-workers might have – if seeing everybody else taking part in it has drawn attention and started to make others interested in the program.

The third and fourth questions were about the outcomes, benefits and results that may have happened due to participation in the health program provided by the company. In the third interview question the participants were asked about concrete changes they might have made as well as advantages and disadvantages that may have occurred after receiving the results from the measurements. Both physical and

psychological changes were asked from the participants. The fourth question focused on the employee engagement; if these kinds of company-initiated health programs, in their opinion, have an impact on managing in the work in general and feeling engaged to the workplace. Some directional examples were made, such as feeling more excited in the work or feeling that the company cares about the interviewee. In addition, participants were asked to provide any negative aspects or outcomes that might have happened during or as a result from the process.

The fifth question explored employees' views on the social side of physical activity and health programs in companies. They were asked whether they saw sporting as atmosphere-lifting factor for the work community. It would also be related to engagement if people feel it easier to create social relationships with people if they spend time doing team sports or just being active.

The questions may be found from the appendix one and two. The original questions and supportive bullet points are in appendix one in Finnish since the interviews were conducted in that language. For clarity, the questions are also provided in English in appendix two.

3.3.2. Limitations

For a qualitative, primary research like this, the best and most thorough results would have emerged from face-to-face interviews but as said before, in this case it was the most convenient solution to arrange a virtual meeting with the participants. Of course, there are a number of disadvantages in this way of interviewing. Firstly, there is always a risk for technological problems when using electronic devices. Three out of five Skype calls went as planned but in two of them I could not see the interviewee. This creates not only situational dissimilarity with other interviews, but it also eliminates the opportunity to see the facial expressions of people that might be valuable for understanding the real feelings and opinions of people. Another issue could be that programs simply are not working for some other reason. With one interviewee problems occurred with having Skype to work at all, causing an inevitable switch to a phone call interview.

Aside from technological problems, some limitations also arise from the small sample size and the fact that participants were all Finnish. This makes it difficult draw conclusions from the research that could be fully suitable for international environment or in other countries. Cultural differences affect behaviour in work life and therefore people might have varying feelings in terms of company health programs and wellbeing in general. Fairly small sample size again limits the information drawn from the interviews. Having more participants could have helped in assuring some points other participants or existing literature have made.

3.4. Methods of analysis

A third-party consultation was used in order to find the right type of analysis style. According to Brooks and King (2014) Template analysis is often used for transcription of interviews but it could work for other kinds of textual data, for example focus group data that would be the closest one to this study. Moreover, according to Waring and Wainwright (2008) template analysis has been found to be useful for organizing and analyzing qualitative and rich data from semi-structured interviews. This method has originated from the USA in 1990s.

The idea of template analysis is to draw themes from what interviewees have said and then, through coding, to sort themes in a reasonable way under specific labels. The codes are then arranged into the template which should present the themes in a meaningful order that indicates the relationships between each other. Finally, the template can be used in more thorough textual analysis which will come later in this thesis.

In this thesis work, drawing themes and coding happened as follows: First, all the interviews were gone through and most important points from each participant were written. After this, the first draft of template was made. Secondly, the first draft worked as a guide for 'theming' what interviewees had said. Thus, the themes at this stage were drawn out of collected data. This means combining statements that indicate similar points of view. After the themes it was marked how many participants supported that statement – even though this is usually not part of the process in template analysis,

it was used here as a helpful tool for the interviewer to clear out the dimensions of some ideas. Thirdly, it was possible to draw codes from the themes, for which colour coding was used as a helpful tool. Themes that supported each other were underlined with the same colour. Lastly, final codes for template were drawn from cross question colour codes.

The data gathered from the interviews was analyzed with the help of template analysis that grouped themes and codes of interviewees' answers. Template was used to draw common views and new opinions that could be either supportive or contrasting for the literature. Template illustrates connections between the themes that are explained and discussed more in-depth later in the analysis.

3.5. Case-study context

The company whose employees participated the interviews is a medium sized consulting company that has strength in technology - its 30 employees consist of program managers, domain experts and senior architects who all have on the average over 20 years of experience in transformation programs, business domains and ICT industry. The company was founded in 2006 and it has its only and main office in Espoo, Finland. As the work in consulting field tends often be mobile and full of working trips, also this company rarely has all of its employees at the office at the same time. One of the values of this company is to improve its employees' quality of life and with this underlying value, FirstBeat program was taken up. In addition, the interest for this program of the HR manager most likely affected positively in the decision to offer employees the participation possibility.

FirstBeat focuses precisely on comprehensive wellbeing and the recovery so it fits the company's values and needs in terms of the nature of the program. The employees would not have to be at the same place at the same time and participation was never mandatory. Hence, only about half of the employees have participated in FirstBeat. The company first started with a test round that had a few participants in the spring 2018 and continued to offer more spots to take part in it during the fall that year. It is likely that they will organize measurements in the future again.

FirstBeat measures heartrate intervals by which it can be said which factors affect either positively or negatively on the recovery of an employee. A professional analyzes the results and gives suggestions for the participant that have to do with for example more sleep, increase in physical activity or timing of the activities during the day. This company and program was used to have interview results from working people who have participated in a health program in the near past. Of course, a program strictly related to physical activity would have been an ideal target for this research, but this was the best option in hand. Moreover, physical activity was also present in this program and in general, wellbeing includes many other things just than activeness.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Employees' interest towards wellbeing and health programs

In this section the quotes from interviewees are first put on Finnish as they were in their original form after which the English translation will follow in italics.

Through the interviews it turned out that only one participant had clear targets in mind before participating in the program. FirstBeat program itself, however, does not increase or plan physical activity for the participants. As stated in the methodology chapter, it gives feedback based on the heart rate interval and a professional gives suggestions for lifestyle changes that would be helpful for the wellbeing. Possibly for this reason, it appeared from the interviews that five of the participants were purely interested in the opportunity that company was offering. Besides the curiosity for the program, another major factor for participation from same number of employees was a general concern in their own health and wellbeing. Often these interviewees had had an active background either the whole life since childhood or during adult life. Thus, it can be argued that the program was useful as far as encouraging to lifestyle changes, but concrete help was minor or left it for the participant to take action. This may hold true with other programs as well - it gives a point to start from but the process needs individuals' own actions to gain actual results from it.

Since the focus point of FirstBeat is on psychological and physical recovery, was this also one of the greatest stimulants for taking part in the health program and supported by five interviewees. From this finding it could be drawn that for the employees participating this program, psychological health and recovery was seen as more important than physical health.

- “— olin myös huolissani omasta unestani, et nukunks mä ennen kaikkea tarpeeks ja millanen se mun unenlaatu karkeesti nyt on.”

” -- I was also worried about my own sleep, whether I, above all, sleep enough and what is roughly my sleep quality like.”

- ” – kun projektityötä tehdään ja mäkin reissaan nyt näin, että mä oon aina tiistaista torstaihin tuolla Turussa, niin halusin vähän nähdä, että miten menee tämä palatuminen, näyttääkö käyrä punaista ja onko balanssissa tämä homma.”
” -- while doing a project work and I also am travelling so that I am always in Turku from Tuesday to Thursday, I wanted to see how my recovery is, if the heartrate curve is red and if there is balance in this (situation).”
- ”—päällimmäisenä asiana oli se, että mulla on tiettyjä haasteita nukkumisen kanssa, että kuinka paljon mä palaudun öisin ja mikä sen vaikutus sykevaihteluun on.”
” – the most important thing was that I have some issues with sleeping, and how much do I recover during the night time and how does that affect heartrate intervals.”

Few participants indicated that recent difficulties in some areas of wellbeing would have made them even more interested in the program. Also, a couple of people stated that specifically sleeping issues were their focus point while participating FirstBeat. Three people indicated that they had received positive recommendations from friends.

- “ – mulla on ollu kavereita, jotka on ollu mukana siinä ja kertonut positiivisia asioita siitä (FirstBeat).”
” – I have had friends who have taken part in it, and they have told positive things about it (FirstBeat).
- ” – mulla on muutama huipputason urheilijakaveri, jotka oli tätä mittausta kokeilleet ja kovasti suositelleet –”
” – I have a couple of top athletes as friends who have tried this measurement and highly suggested it.”

In today's market word-of-mouth is considered as a very powerful tool for communication (Gildin, 2003). It seems from the interview answers that word-of-mouth has also been a communication and marketing tool in this occasion. Gildin states that it comes across as sincere for example because it is not thought as promotional activity - more like a suggestion from a friend or acquaintance.

More reasons that increased the interest in participating, were the desire to track results and compare them with previous measurements that had been done with the same program as well as interest towards new technology and how the program has developed over the years. Two participants also said that they were intrigued by the appliances and different platforms that are used in order to improve health. Such could be sensors that were used in FirstBeat, Apps or groups in social media. Findings would indicate that the ability of tracking and seeing results along the way would motivate people for participation. As a matter of fact, a study by Asimakopoulos , Asimakopoulos and Spillers (2017) shows supporting evidence that the data, gamification, content design and motivational feedback that comes along with the sports apps affect highly on the motivation and self-efficacy of users.

4.2. Company's role for employees' wellbeing

From the interviews it became clear that otherwise than offering the possibility for participation in Firstbeat program there was not that much encouraging, other than on behalf of HR manager, for everybody to take part in the program. However, it was mentioned that if the company had not brought this into the awareness of employees, it would have been unlikely that the program would have been found and participated in.

- "Se tuli meidän tolta henkilöstöjohtajalta, että on mahdollista saada kokeilla ja musta se tuli just tosi kivaan aikaan. Mä olin miettiny noita asioita muutenkin ja sitten kun tuli mahdollisuus nii mä tartuin siihen heti, että joo tottakai. En mä olis muuten sitä varmaan löytänyt tai keksinyt(FirstBeat)."

"It came from our HR manager that it is possible to try, and I think that the timing was nice. I had been thinking about these things and when the opportunity came I grabbed it right away. Otherwise I would not have found or figured it out (FirstBeat)."

- Firman osuus tässä nyt oli lähinnä se 'mahdollistaja'.

"The role of the company here was mostly to be the enabler."

Besides FirstBeat, the company also provides facilities for activeness through having a gym that is conveniently in the same location as the company.

Three of the participants mentioned that the head of human resources in the company had been excited about the opportunity and suggested it for the interviewees. However, one participant felt that the company itself had not had a remarkable affect for the participation decision. Here it can be claimed though, that some participants saw the employer or company equal to HR manager. This might explain why some people felt that there was not much encouragement when some people did.

- “No ei sinä oikeestaan, työnantaja anto mahdollisuuden siihen osallistua, että se jäi sitten ihan omaan harkintaan, että haluuko siihen osallistua ja ottaa selvää mitä se on –”

”Not really (encouraging by the company), the employer gave the possibility to participate and it was left for an individual’s own consideration, whether to participate and find out what is it.”

4.3. Usefulness of the program

4.3.1. Positive benefits

All seven participants agreed that when company provides health enhancing programs for employees, it increases the feeling of engagement for the job and workplace; it indicates that company cares about its employees.

- “No mulle henkilökohtaisesti, koska tää on semmonen asia mikä mua itseäni kiinnostaa. Niin tulee semmonen hyvä lämmin olo, et hei kiva, että mun työnantaja on kiinnostunut myös tästä ja yleensäkin että ne on kiinnostunut mun hyvinvoinnista ja antaa tällaisia mahdollisuuksia.”

”For me personally this is something that interests me. It makes me feel warm inside to know that also the employer is interested in this and generally interested in my wellbeing and offers this kind of possibilities.”

Mental and psychological benefits after participation created the greatest part of the benefits mentioned by interviewees. This was also the biggest factor in terms of what motivated people to participate as mentioned earlier in this chapter. Three out of seven said their energy levels been higher after acting by the feedback from the measurements. Also, two participants pointed out better mental strength and ability of not letting minor things bother as much as before. These factors affect the happiness of human and perhaps improved lifestyle or increased physical activity made participants happier, as would Stubbe et al. (2007) suggest. Through these findings it could be argued that this specific program was indeed useful for mental health of the participants.

- “ – mieliala on parempi ja henkinen jaksaminen on paremmalla tasolla.” ” – ensin parani fyysinen kunto ja kun sen ymmärsi, niin sitä kautta selkeesti tuli henkistä jaksamista ja voimavaroja enemmän.”
” – mood is better and mental strength is at a better level.” “—first the physical condition improved and when that was understood, it clearly gave more mental strength and assets.”
- “—illalla (töiden jälkeen) jaksaa tehdä asioita eikä ole sellaista oloa, että täytyy tietoisesti pakottaa itseään tekemään jotain.”
” – in the evening after work, I have the energy to do things and I don’t have the feeling that I intentionally have to force myself to do something.”

In addition to the mental side, also physical benefits were mentioned a few times. However, they were not considered as important as for example improvement in recovery from work. About half of the participants said that now, after the measurements, they have paid more attention to recovery and made some people to do necessary changes in life. For example, there emerged a possibility of personal life after the work day to be more burdensome than work. In addition, there had been understanding of the importance of light exercise since the recovery process is easier after that than after high-intensity exercise. These kinds of findings might have something to do with the nature and stress level of the consultation work as well as the age group of the participants. Often people at that age have families and other

businesses to cope with that may increase the physiological burden outside of the work. However, each of these two facts were stated only by one participant. Improved quantity and quality of sleep were mentioned by three participants.

- "Mitään hirveen radikaaleja asioita ei siinä nyt tullut – mä oon välillä heräillyt yöllä, niin sain neuvoa magnesiumin käytöstä ja ainakin kuvittelen että se toimi."

"It did not show any radical things – I have been waking up at night so I got advice using magnesium and at least I think it works."

- "Olen yrittänyt vähän rauhoittaa, järkeistää ja järjestää tota meidän himasirkusta, mutta toki siinä tuli myös sellaisia asioita, että mä oon yrittänyt lisätä sen jälkeen sellaista kevyttä liikuntaa, joka auttaa palautumiseen. – tän ikäisenä myöskin palautuminen kestää niin paljon, et kokonaishyvinvoinnin kannalta se ei oo ihan tarkoituksen mukaista, ettei joka päivä tartte rääkätä ihan kunnolla"

"I have been trying to calm down and organize the hassle at home but it also indicated such things as that I have been trying to do more low-level exercise that helps with recovery. – at this age recovering takes so much time that it is not practical to train so hard every day."

The extent to which participants had taken action after receiving the feedback varied a little. At least half of those who participated FirstBeat had had useful help with both physical and mental strength. For example, one participant had advice to improve recovery through low intensity exercising. In addition, the attitudes towards the feedback varied between some participants; only one had changed some aspects of lifestyle immediately but three interviewees felt that there was not a big difference in their behavior after receiving the results. One participant said interestingly that even if the results indicated that no change was needed, was it still useful and calming information. After the program couple of participants said they would continue maintaining good lifestyle and were interested in participating in FirstBeat again, if it was offered. How well the program is accepted and the willingness to make the changes suggested by it differs from many individual characteristics such as past lifestyle. Also, what is ought to be true is that the employee engagement to health programs vary between companies and job fields.

- “Oli hyödyllistä ja tein välittömästi korjausliikkeitä, eli kyl se suurin arvo mun mielestä oli nimenomaan siinä, että se osoitti sen että palautumista ei tule ja nyt täytyy raskaasti muuttua ja lähteä miettimään sitä miten sitä palautumista saataisi enemmän.”

”It was useful and I made changes immediately and I think the biggest benefit was when it showed that there is no recovery and major changes must be made and start to think how the recovery level could be increased.”

- “Se enemmänkin vahvisti, että ne asiat mitä nyt tässä oon tehny, muuttanu muutaman vuoden sisään, niin ne toimii. Niin mulla oli siinä mielessä helppo tilanne, että mun ei kauheesti tarvinnu ruveta vaihtamaan (elämäntapoja/terveystottumuksia).”

”Mainly it assured me that the things I do now and the changes I have made during the past few years are working. I had a good situation, so I did not have to start changing much.”

4.3.2. Critique and negative experiences

Speaking of criticism towards health program, many participants stated the need for continuity so that the usefulness of it would reach its highest level. In addition to this, one participant suggested the program to be a good starting point for individuals, but if the target would be to have results or improvement in lifestyle, should there be more incentives offered by the company. Moreover, creating a competitive environment out of health programs could motivate participants and make it socially more engaging.

Some other negative experiences also were mentioned; for two participants, the sensors started to bother on the third day but contrastingly few people felt that the measurement period could have been longer. For one participant, the timing of the measurements was bad, because the period was unusually rush free. Moreover, because sensors were on such a short period of time, the same interviewee felt nervous of own behavior during the measurements. In addition to this, one participant said that the sensors could have been more modern. Hence, the major problems were

the timing and the outdated technology. For the timing participant could have impact a little by deciding which days to have the sensors on but it was most likely that it had to be in a specific time range such as a month. In addition, the technology side is something a participant cannot affect so it can be said that most of the problems were something that could not be improved by the participant. Something that was not strictly related to FirstBeat but which could be derived from all health programs; the risk of becoming addicted to track the results. That could then lead to mental burdening that could result in affecting employee wellbeing negatively. Finally, there had been technical issues with few participants; one had had problems during the measurements and other seemed to have false results.

- “Meillä oli se kolme päivää, niin se on aika lyhyt aika ja ehkä vähän jännitti, että mitä pitää tehdä ja miten pitää olla—”
“We had that three days so it is quite a short amount of time and maybe I was little nervous of what to do and how to act.”
- ”Laite nyt on vähän isokokoinen -- toihan on parikyt vuotta vanha design koko testi, antureitahan pystyy tekemään varmaan erilaisia, rannekkeita, jotka pystyy mittaamaan samoja asioita.”
“The device was quite big – it is about twenty-years-old design the whole test, different sensors can probably be made or wristbands that can measure the same things”

4.4. Social effect of physical activity and health programs in companies

At the moment individuals in the company engage themselves in varying levels of physical activity. Hence, employees do not generally feel like exercising or physical group activating would be highly important factor for group atmosphere. It was mentioned that nowadays business world is remarkably appearance oriented and it could be the reason why some people would not be excited to participate in health programs or group exercising if they are not that athletic or they are ashamed of their looks. However, majority of the respondents feel like it would improve social environment and relationships at the workplace if they had sporting activities together outside the working hours. For example, two of interviewees mentioned alpine skiing

trips that company has organized to be a great, an annual event for this purpose. The only thing that would be required for this, is that there should be a mutually interesting sport or activity.

- "Joo, olishan se hyvä ja tietenkin siinä on se haaste, että mikä oli semmosta kaikille sopivaa."

"Yes, it would be good and of course there is the challenge of what is something that suits for everybody."

Despite general positivity towards health programs and physical activity, there was an interviewee who considered own hobbies to be enough for being active. Additionally, the participant felt that doing physical activity together with co-workers would be important for work place atmosphere.

5. DISCUSSION

For this primary research, there was no clear underlying hypothesis that would be reflected after collecting the data but there were two research questions and the target was to find answers for those through the research. Thus, the research questions will be reflected in the following chapter. Since semi-structured interviews were done with open-ended questions and because the flow of questions varied between participants, were the situations laid-back as well. The goal was to define employees' own perspectives and see whether they are in line with the literature. Template analysis has been formed from the connections between what interviewees have said and it has been used to form this analysis section.

5.1. To what extent do workplace wellness/fitness programs enhance workers' wellbeing?

5.1.1. The importance of company health programs

Interestingly, it emerged from the interviews that making company health programs competitive would work as a motivator for employees and encourage for trying one's best in physical activity. This was in contrast with what Brinkley et al. (2017) suggested while stating that unhealthy competition in sports between employees would rather prevent people for participating in sport events. This brings us to something that was highly emphasized in literature review and that also holds true with interviewees' perceptions; in order to benefit from the health programs as much as possible, they have to be planned and executed by what the employees as individuals need and what the targets of the company are as a whole. What Zijlstra and Zonnetag (2007) claim is related to this and the findings of recovery as an important health-enhancing factor: through their research they realized that to be able to understand employees' wellbeing better, also the 'after-work-time' needs to be looked at. In addition, Takahashi (2012) suggests establishing employees 'work-sleep-balance' to improve work-life-balance and simultaneously wellbeing.

Interviewees also felt that being active together would improve the social atmosphere at the workplace. As mentioned in the literature review, one way to enhance

employees' health and wellbeing as well as increase their happiness could be socially interactive sports or sports events. For example, the study by Joubert de Beer (2010) showed that interactive sports would improve communication and healthy atmosphere in the company. However, if there are people who are not interested in this kind of activities in the first place, it can be more harmful than useful for the company and the individuals. Negative attitude can spread to others and intoxicate social environment. As Brinkley et al. (2017) found making company sport activities too competitive might prevent people from participating in exercising. Therefore, it is important that common interest in terms of activity would be found and participation would be voluntary at all times. One activeness increasing possibility that was suggested by one interviewee could be combining work meetings and sports. This way employees would not have to take time from outside of work to take part in the company-initiated activities, if that creates a barrier for participation.

What was discovered from the interviews was that after receiving the results, the participants became into the realization of pitfalls of their work-life balance and made their own adjustments when it was possible. Then, some interviewees indicated that they would participate in this kind of program again if it was offered. It was even stated that there would be a real need for further initiatives from the company so that individuals would benefit as much as possible from the initiatives. From these perceptions it can be derived that one-time health programs organized by the employer might not be enough – there needs to be continuation. Additionally, taking us back to literature review and what Robertson (2005) has stated claims that for better understanding of especially psychological wellbeing, systematic tracking of employees' feelings along the process within a longer time period is important. He states that mood can vary within one day and this is the reason why asking peoples' feelings about, for example, health program satisfaction at one point might not be the final one.

5.1.2. Physical activity for employee wellbeing

5.1.2.1. Physical side

Despite the fact that the health program the interviewees had participated in was not directly about sports or physical activity rather than recovery, during the interviews these two aspects were still discussed. Major part of participants showed interest towards healthy lifestyle but with this program it seemed to be more about the recovery. In fact, Zijlstra and Zonnetag (2007) state that recovery is important factor for detachment from work, helps with decreasing fatigue and psychological parameters during the night time. It also affects sleep.

Had this been a different kind of program, one that would have focused specifically on physical activity, the attitudes might have been different. However, it became clear that even this program had been helpful for physical strength, higher energy levels and encouraged participants to engage themselves in healthy lifestyle and exercising a little more, if they were not doing so already. This would indicate a holistic perspective on wellbeing – it seems from the interviews, even though not strictly said by the participants, that taking part in a health activity that concerns only one area of wellbeing, makes it often easier for the participant to engage oneself in other health related activities as well and increase the interest level for such lifestyle. Wellbeing, after all, is a multidimensional concept as for example Rath and Harter (2010) state; it consists of career, social, financial, physical and community wellbeing. Virginpulse.com described great wellness programs to aim for holistic wellbeing which would logically include sleep and rest in it as well. Hence, for overall wellbeing, this has to be an important factor.

There was some varying between interviewees with regard to attitude as well to which represents normal individuality and personal preferences of people. In line with what Huang and Humphreys (2006) have found, variety of perceived usefulness or help from being active can derive from many reasons, for example economic and

environmental. What might be fundamental for the employees of this company are the nature of the job and stage of life that can affect the stances and preferences on allocation of free time. Consulting is often highly time consuming and combining active lifestyle with this job might be more difficult than with a job that has fixed working hours and the work is always done in the same location. Therefore, what amount of physical activity is even possible is also dependent on the job type. Another reason - besides busy work life - for lower interest or capability for participation is what happens at home – often personal life and family takes time from day leaving less possibilities to take care of personal wellbeing. It is worth mentioning, though, that social and family life is also important for psychological wellbeing. As presented in the literature review, unstable work-life balance and lack of support might prevent people from participating in health programs. Moreover, one of the major barriers for participation is time limitations of an employee (Cooper and Barton, 2016). Therefore, what was found through the primary research appears to hold true in this case.

5.1.2.2. Psychological side

According to the findings, psychological wellbeing seems to be important for these employees, and it might be a by-product of improved quality or increased quantity of sleep or recovery. Literature presents broad lists of psychological benefits that physical activity can cause. Just as Hassmén et al (2000) stated, it increases happiness, decreases depression and stress. There is no denying that good sleep has benefits for employees; it improves alertness, performance in general and eases overall recovery from work (Takahashi, 2012). Nevertheless, it was clear that the supportive effects for mental wellbeing gained from physical activity that were stated in the literature were true concerning this primary research as well.

Something that was mentioned by one interviewee was the importance of low intensity exercising. Again, it is an individual-dependent question how much and what type of physical activity would be reasonable for a person. Referring back to the literature review, it was stated by Taylor et al. (2015) that it can be determined through 'dose-response relationship' affect the achieved benefits from physical activity. Of course, what a body of an individual can and should do for better health is not the same for everyone and therefore personal measurements are important for reaching the best results. The quantity of physical activity needs to be adjusted to personal and working

life which brings us to the perceptions of work-life balance. When physical activity might be hard to implement in everyday life, it can also relieve the mental burden that comes from business. According to Aittasalo and Livson (2016), some obstacles for physical activity participation can be unstable work-life balance and lack of support. This could be fixed if the employer or company would take initiative in order to improve the wellbeing of its employees. It would decrease the stress of employee for organizing own activities and would simultaneously improve psychological wellbeing.

One participant stated that measurements made this user a little nervous. In addition, another interviewee experienced slight addiction towards health measurements and tracking of results. Some negative aspects that were found by other authors were the stress that would come from performance anxiety or too harsh goals set for oneself (Paton, 2016) or unhealthy competition between employees when it comes to exercising (Brinkley et al., 2017). Even if in some cases the technology for tracking physical performances and health interest participants, can they also cause addiction and be a stress-increasing factor. This suggests that focusing too closely on healthy lifestyle and wellbeing might actually become stressful and harmful for an individual both psychologically and physically.

5.2. What role does physical activity have in peoples' engagement in work?

Also, the perceptions of a health program increasing employee engagement differentiated between interviewees. Some stated that they personally felt it being important and others felt it did not have much impact or that own hobbies were enough. Virginpulse.com stated that it is company dependent what engagement strategy works and should be implemented in a company. This seems to be relevant especially for this case; a consulting company - in which employees might not necessarily see each other that often not to mention have time to participate in joint sport activities - has to evaluate what type of program would meet the engagement needs of employees. It might be that this kind of program where people do the same thing but individually is a better option than getting everybody to the same place at the same time. Bakker et al. (2008) mentioned the importance of personal resources for engagement which seemed to be applicable for some of the interviewees of this primary research. For

some employees, doing it in their own way might be more effective than following a collective program that the whole company has for its workers.

Something else that came across from the interviews but was not as looked upon on other literature, was technological or functional problems with the health programs. Of course, this depends on the program and what it contains, but at least regarding FirstBeat, the existing technological issues deteriorated customer experience and might have affected negatively the overall attitudes towards health programs. If an individual has already been suspicious towards or uncomfortable with participating in health programs, it can be difficult to change the first impression of programs which can then prevent people from participating in these programs in the future. Frakt and Carroll (2014) suggest that one of the negative sides that may cause a health program to fail is poor design. This might mean focusing on the company characteristics but the technological design as well.

As stated, the physical side might have not been the focal point for the participants of FirstBeat which may be due to the nature of the program. However, as Paton (2016) explains, some sport events or such activities organized in companies might have a totally different goal than improving the health of employees. The focus can be in improving organizational culture and atmosphere, which is then again connected to employees' psychological wellbeing, sense of belonging and engagement. As drawn from the interviews, all the interviewees thought that the fact of company offering such health-enhancing programs improves employee engagement just by being there for workers to use. Making employees feel that they are cared for and respected is enough for improving engagement. This finding creates a link to what Robinson et al. (2004) has stated; the feeling of being valued and involved is one of the main drivers for employee engagement. When the employees know that there is something that the employer has created in order to improve their wellbeing, it alone makes them feel engaged to work and the company. So, it could be that the actual participation is not even needed in order to improve the feel of individual engagement. Logically thinking, this would mean that no matter what kind of initiative it was about, anything that indicates for the employees that they are important for the company would work as an engaging tool. It might not have to be increasing the physical activity level of

employees, yet it would improve both physical, psychological, and social wellbeing simultaneously.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this section is to conclude the findings from the primary research done for this thesis work. First it will summarize the thoughts from findings after which there will be discussion on the relevance of these findings from the perspective of International Business. Lastly, the limitations affecting the research results and suggestions for future research will be stated.

6.1. Main Findings

6.1.1. To what extent do workplace wellness/fitness programs enhance workers' wellbeing?

Referring back to the first research question presented in chapter one that questioned the functionality of fitness programs for employees' wellness, there are a few reasons why physical activity might not be as important for employee wellbeing as initially thought. Firstly, there are the individual differences between employees and differences of companies that define what wellbeing is and what kind of actions are needed for reaching it. Though majority of people prefer to be active, there is variance in this. Moreover, the size of the company and mobility of work are something that need to be considered when planning for employee activation. Therefore, there is no right way to engage people through wellbeing programs, but it is certain that thorough evaluation of employees' needs is important for choosing the right methods and programs.

The underlying willingness to take part in company wellness programs stems from general interest towards person's own health. Something that was emphasized even more to be the best advantages in these programs instead of improved physical strength, was the psychological advantages. It seems that for employees who have been working for a long time, the focus in terms of health should primarily be on reducing stress, mental burden and having work-life balance.

6.1.2. What role does physical activity have in peoples' engagement in work?

To answer the second research question; what became clear already from the literature review, held true according to the primary research as well: health and wellbeing programs are useful, and they work as an improving factor for employee engagement. More specifically, the reason why employees feel the engagement is connected more on the holistic wellbeing than just for on the physical activity. Exercising is only one part of wellbeing and even though it is considered as being positive and health enhancing, activeness itself is not the core of engagement or overall wellbeing. This is illustrated in figure one. Interestingly, when there is no company-initiated care for the employees, for example health programs, it might even result as disengagement of employees.

6.2. Implications for International Business

The topic and findings are relatable all around the world since employee wellbeing and engagement is present in every workplace – or at least it should be. However, what makes it more difficult to connect and implement findings to every company is the cultural differences of nationalities and possibly multicultural workforce in one company. For example, socializing can be very different in different countries which may shape the chosen methods for activity and engagement. In multicultural environment the same suggestions are valid as anywhere else – a clear understanding of what employees want and need for engagement and satisfaction so that company can perform as well as it can as a whole.

6.3. Limitations of the findings

The primary research has several limitations that need to be taken into account when implementing findings to other contexts.

The sample, with whom the interviews were made, was only a group of seven people from a company that has about 30 employees. This is fairly small amount of people which means that it can hardly be generalized to be true at all times. However, the

small sample size made it possible to do more thorough interviews. All, except one, had participated in a health program which means that they were already interested in health and similar topics. The participant who had not yet participated in FirstBeat was still very excited about it and willing to try it in the future. This creates a possibility for biased perceptions on health programs in general – if the sample would have had participants who had not tried FirstBeat at all, the results might have been different and possibly consisted more critical views on health programs.

Some aspects of the research process add to limitations. Due to technical difficulties, all of the interviews could not be done the same way. The initial idea was to have regular Skype meetings individually with everyone. Only with three out of seven interviewees were seen in the Skype meeting and two out of seven interviews had to be done through a phone call. Not seeing the participants faces makes it more difficult to fully understand and reflect their sayings. Hence, the perceptions from virtual face-to-face interviews might have been better understood. Another result-affecting aspect could possibly be the fact that all the interviews were done in Finnish and only after coding for the template, the data was translated to English. Of course, it would have created challenge for both the interviewees and interviewer to do the process in English, which is not the native language. Furthermore, speaking in a language that a person is comfortable with and fully understands, is a better option for drawing conclusions and for thorough understanding.

6.4. Suggestions for Further Research

In the light of what has been found from the existing literature there are some areas that could be looked upon even more to get a comprehensive picture of employee wellbeing and engagement through participation in physical activity and health programs.

It has been mentioned in this thesis that above all, a thorough evaluation of what excites employees in terms of activation and what makes them feel valued in the workplace is important for being able to choose the right health and engagement enhancing strategy for a company. Thus, knowing how to evaluate this could be the

first suggestion for further research. Which could be the best ways to tell what people need and want and how to choose the health program based on these results?

Finding negative perspectives of health programs and how physical activity could have negative impact on employee wellbeing has been surprisingly challenging. This indicates that there needs to be more research on that area. Knowing the dark side of programs and too intensive physical activity might be helpful for understanding the existing risks in order to prevent them and to identify them when they occur. Even though there is not much about the negative of these two aspects the downside does exist, as can be drawn from some findings from the primary data and literature review of this thesis.

Finally, to further investigate whether findings of this research hold true in general, a further primary research with other employees or another company could be useful.

REFERENCES

1. Aittasalo, M. & Livson, M. (2016) 'Ten questions (TenQ) on workplace HEPA promotion – results from a survey to HEPA Europe members.' *HEPA Europe*. [Accessed on 10 January 2019].
2. Albrecht, H. (2017) '3 Reasons Corporate Wellness Failed – And How To Change The Game'. *Forbes*. [Online] Available from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesfounders/2017/12/14/3-reasons-corporate-wellness-failed-and-how-to-change-the-game/#30c72d2e4c12> [Accessed on 13 February 2019].
3. Arisandi, J.F. & Chaerudin, R. (2015) 'ANALYZING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN BUSINESS COMMUNITY CASE STUDY: CIMAHI CREATIVE ASSOCIATION'. [PDF]. *Journal of Business and Management*. 4(1): 57-71.
4. Asimakopoulos, S. Asimakopoulos, G. & Spillers, F. (2017) 'Motivation and User Engagement in Fitness Tracking: Heuristics for Mobile Healthcare Wearables'. [PDF] *informatics*. 4(5).
5. Bakker, A.B.; Schaufeli, W.B.; Leiter, M.P. & Taris, T.W. (2008) 'POSITION PAPER - Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology'. [PDF] *Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. Work and Stress*. 22(3): 187-200. Available from: <https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/301.pdf> [Accessed on 17 January 2019].
6. Bakker, A.B. & Leiter, M.P. (2010) *Work Engagement - A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research*. East Sussex, UK: Psychology Press.
7. Bhaskara, P.M. & Gustomo, A. (2015) 'Mapping and Improving Employee Engagement Driver Factor at PT.XYZ'. *Journal of Business and Management*. 4(6): 623-634.

8. Brinkley, A., Freeman, J., McDermott, H. & Munir, F. (2017) 'What are the facilitators and obstacles to participation in workplace team sport? A qualitative study.' *AIMS Public Health*. 4(1), pp. 94-126. [Accessed on 25 January 2019].

9. Brooks, J. & King, N. (2014) 'Doing Template Analysis: Evaluating an end-of life care service'. [PDF] *SAGE research methods cases*.

10. Cherry, K. (2018) *Understanding Social Exchange Theory in Psychology – How It Influences Relationships*. Available from: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-social-exchange-theory-2795882> [Accessed on 11 February 2019].

11. Cooper, K & Barton, G.C (2016) 'An exploration of physical activity and wellbeing in university employees.' [PDF] *Perspectives in Public Health*. 136 (3): 152-160. Retrieved from database: ProQuest. [Accessed on 13 February 2019].

12. *Corporate Wellness Programs* (n.d.) Available from: <https://www.virginpulse.com/corporate-wellness-programs/> [Accessed on 12 February 2019].

13. Crabtree, S. (2005) "Engagement Keeps the Doctor Away - A happy employee is a healthy employee, according to a GMJ survey. *The Gallup Management Journal*. Available from: https://www.nova.edu/ie/ice/forms/engagement_keeps_the_doctor_away.pdf [Accessed on 22 March 2019].

14. Ding, D.; Lawson, K.D.; Kolbe-Alexander, T.L.; Finkelstein, E.A.; Katzmarzyk, P.T.; van Mechelen, W and Pratt, M. (2016) 'The economic burden of physical inactivity: a global analysis of major non-communicable diseases'. Available from: https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/4299115/mod_resource/content/0/Din

g_2016_The%20economic%20burden%20of%20physical%20inactivity%20-%20a%20global%20analysis%20of%20major%20non-comm.pdf [Accessed on 13 February 2019].

15. Downward, P. & Rasciute, S. (2011) 'Does sport make you happy? An analysis of the well-being derived from sports participation'. *International Journal of Applied Economics*. 25(3): 331-348. Retrieved from: Taylor & Francis Online. [Accessed on 15 January 2019].
16. Fazary, M.H. & Gustomo, A. (2016) 'Analysis of Employee Engagement in PT Kartina Trisatria'. *Journal of Business and Management*. 5(1): 31-40.
17. Frakt, A. & Carroll, A.E. (2014) 'Do Workplace Wellness Programs Work? Usually Not'. *The New York Times*. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/12/upshot/do-workplace-wellness-programs-work-usually-not.html> [Accessed on 13 February 2019].
18. GILDIN, S. (2003). UNDERSTANDING THE POWER OF WORD-OF-MOUTH. RAM. Revista de Administração Mackenzie, [Online] 4(1): 92-106. Available: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=195418020007> [Accessed on 23 March 2019].
19. Halkos, G. & Bousinakis, D. (2015) 'The effect of stress and satisfaction on productivity'. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*. 59(5): 415-431. Retrieved from: EmeraldInsight. [Accessed on 10 February 2019].
20. Hassmén, P.; Koivula, N. & Uutela, A. (2000) 'Physical Exercise and Psychological Well-Being: A Population Study in Finland'. *Preventive Medicine*. 30(1): 17-25. Retrieved from: EmeraldInsight. [Accessed on 22 January 2019].

21. Herrick, C. (2009) 'Shifting blame/selling health: corporate social responsibility in the age of obesity'. Retrieved from: Wiley Online Library [Accessed on 22 March 2019].
22. How Morton Salt is building a great company culture (n.d.) Available from: https://community.virginpulse.com/mortonsalt-casestudies?utm_campaign=CAM-2017-01-MortonSalt-CaseStudy&utm_source=Website&utm_medium=Customer-Success [Accessed on 12 February].
23. Huang, H. & Humphreys, B.R. (2012) 'Sports participation and happiness: Evidence from US microdata'. *Journal of Economic Psychology*. 33(4): 776-793. Retrieved from: ScienceDirect.
24. Hudson (2016) 'The impact of sport on the workplace'. [PDF] *The Social Issues Research Centre*.
25. Hyde, K. F. (200) 'Recognising deductive processes in qualitative research'. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*. 3(2): 82-90. Retrieved from: EmeraldInsight. [Accessed on 23 March 2019].
26. Kohll, A. (2017) 'The Role Managers Play In Shaping Employee Well-Being' [Online] *Forbes*. Available from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/workday/2018/07/06/the-adobe-digital-academy-an-apprenticeship-for-todays-world/#1b6c62727931> [Accessed on 29 March 2019].
27. Kowalski, T.H.P & Loretto, W (2017) 'Well-being and HRM in the changing workplace'. *The International Journal of Human Resources Management*. 28(16): 2229-2255. Retrieved from: Taylor & Francis Online. [Accessed on 9 March 2019].

28. Jamshed, S. (2014) 'Qualitative research method-interviewing and observation'. *Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacy*. 5(4): 87-88. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4194943/> [Accessed on 23 March 2019].
29. Joubert, Y.T & de Beer, J.J (2010) 'Experiences of Employees Who Participate in Organisational Team Sport Activities.' *Journal of Emerging Trends in Economics and Management Sciences (JETEMS)*. 1(1): 51-59.
30. Lovelace, K.J. (2015) 'The Impact of Employee Engagement and a Positive Organizational Culture on an Individual's Ability to Adapt to Organization Change'. *Eastern Academy of Management Proceedings: Organization Behavior and Theory Track*. Massachusetts, USA: May 2015. Management Faculty Publications.
31. Macey, W.H. & Schneider, B. (2008) 'The Meaning of Employee Engagement'. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*. [Online] 1(1): 3–30. Available from: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/industrial-and-organizational-psychology/article/meaning-of-employee-engagement/0517A938DBEDA2E0BE2FBE27A9DDC4DB> [Accessed on 16 January 2019]
32. Mills, P.R.; Kessler, R.C.; Cooper, J. & Sullivan, S. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. [Online] 22(1). Available from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/672b/12e1fb6138f955e8153e7ffbf20aa73c559.pdf> [Accessed on 24 January 2019].
33. *Our Solutions* (n.d.) Available from: <https://www.virginpulse.com/our-products/> [Accessed on 12 February 2019].
34. Definition of a Case Study (2018) Available from: <https://www.pressacademia.org/definition-of-case-study/> [Accessed on 23 March 2019].

35. Opdenakker (2005) 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Four Interview Techniques in Qualitative research'. *Forum: Qualitative research*. 7(11). [Accessed on 4 March 2019].
36. Robinson, D.; Payman, S. & Hayday, S. (2004) 'The Drivers of Employee Engagement'. *Journal of Business and Management*. Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies. IES Report 408.
37. Personnel Today (2012) 'Who should manage employee wellbeing?'. Available from: <https://www.personneltoday.com/hr/who-should-manage-employee-wellbeing/> [Accessed on 29 March 2019].
38. Pescud, M., Teal, R., Shilton, T., Slevin, T., Ledger, M., Waterworth, P. & Rosenberg, M. (2015) *BMC Public Health*. Retrieved from database: EBSCOhost. [Accessed on 3 February 2019].
39. Rath, T & Harter, J. (2010) *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements*. New York: Gallup Press.
40. Remo, N. (2012) *Comparing Two Models of Employee Engagement: An Examination of Antecedents and Outcome Variables*. PhD Dissertation. Windsor, Ontario, Canada: University of Windsor. [Published].
41. Robertson, I. (2015) 'How do I measure psychological wellbeing'. *Robertsoncooper*. Available from: <https://www.robertsoncooper.com/blog/how-do-i-measure-psychological-wellbeing/> [Accessed on 14 February 2019].
42. Shuk, B. & Reio, T.G. (2013) 'Employee Engagement and Well-being: A Moderation Model and Implications for Practice'. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. Retrieved from database: ReasearchGate. [Accessed on 22 March 2019].

43. Shuk, B. & Reio, T.G. (2013) 'Employee Engagement and Well-being'. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*. 21(1): 43-58. Retrieved from database: ReasearchGate. [Accessed on 4 February 2019].
44. Sjörgen, T. (2006) *Effectiveness of a Workplace Physical Exercise Intervention on the Functioning, Work Ability and Subjective Wellbeing of Office Workers - A Cluster Randomised Controlled Cross-over Trial with a One-year Follow-up*. [PDF] Studies in Sport, Physical Education and Health. Dissertation. Jyväskylä, Finland: University of Jyväskylä [Published].
45. Society For Human Resource Management (2016) *SHRM Survey Findings: 2016 Strategic Benefits— Wellness Initiatives*. [PDF]
46. Stubbe, J.H.; de Moor, M.H.M.; Boomsma, D.I. & de Geus, E.J.C. (2007) 'The association between exercise participation and well-being: A co-twin study'. *Preventive Medicine*.44(2): 148-152. Retrieved from: ScienceDirect. [Accessed on 21 January 2019].
47. Sun Life Financial (2013) *Sun-Life Buffet National Wellness Survey*. [PDF].
48. Takahashi, M. (2012) 'Prioritizing sleep for healthy work schedules'. *Journal of Physiological Anthropology*. 31(6). Available from: <https://jphysiolanthropol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1880-6805-31-6#Abs1> [Accessed on 17 March 2019]
49. Taylor, P.; Davies, L.; Wells, P.; Gilbertson, J. & Tayleur, W. (2015) 'A review of the Social Impacts of Culture and Sport'. [PDF].
50. Tonts, M. (2005). Competitive sport and social capital in rural Australia. [Online] *Journal of Rural Studies*. 21(2). Retrieved from database: Elsevier. [Accessed on 22 January 2019].

51. Vilen, R. (2011) *Managing Employee Wellbeing Why Do Finnish Organizations Provide Wellness Services?*. M.A. Thesis. Finland: Aalto University School of Business. [Published].
52. Waring, T. and Wainwright, D. (2008) "Issues and Challenges in the Use of Template Analysis: Two Comparative Case Studies from the Field". *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*. 6(1):85 – 94. Available from: www.ejbrm.com [Accessed on 6 March 2019].
53. Weiner, L.J. (2015) 'The Trouble With Wellness Programs'. *HealthLeaders* Available from: <https://www.healthleadersmedia.com/strategy/trouble-wellness-programs?page=0%2C1> [Accessed on 13 February 2019]
54. Woodruffe, C. (2006) "The crucial importance of employee engagement". *Human Resource Management International Digest*. 14(1): 3-5 Retrieved from: EmeraldInsight. [Accessed on 22 March 2019].
55. Wolters Kluwer (2019) 'Employer Control of Employee Off-Duty Conduct is Limited'. Available from: <https://www.bizfilings.com/toolkit/research-topics/office-hr/employer-control-of-employee-offduty-conduct-is-limited> [Accessed on 30 March 2019].
56. World Health Organization - Regional Office For Europe (n.d.) 'Benefits of regular physical activity'. [Accessed on 15 January 2019].
57. Zijlstra, F.R.H. & Sonnetag, S. (2007) 'After work is done: psychological perspectives on recovery from work'. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*. 15(2): 129-138. Retrieved from database: Taylor & Francis Online. [Accessed on 16 March 2019].

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Template analysis

1. Why would people participate in health programs?
 - a. General interest on own wellbeing and fitness
 - i. Recent health decreasing problems
 - ii. Sleep related issues
 - b. Background with physical activity
 - c. Recommendations and experiences from friends
 - d. Interest in seeing new results
 - e. Interest for technological side
2. Employer's role in employees' wellbeing?
 - a. Company offers help
 - b. People at work encourage and inspire for physical activity
3. Outcomes benefits of this particular program?
 - a. Sense of engagement through caring
 - i. Nonexistence of health programs as a disadvantage for a company
 - b. Better physical strength
 - c. Better psychological wellbeing
 - d. Improved quantity and quality of sleep
 - i. Paying attention to recovery
 - e. Perceptions on work-life balance
 - f. Negative user experience
 - i. Technological issues
 - ii. Wrong timing
 - iii. Sense of addiction
4. Workplace related socio-psychological effects of physical activity?
 - a. Varying levels of activity among employees
 - i. Appearance oriented business world

- b. Positive attitude towards increasing group sporting
 - i. Combining sports with work meetings
 - ii. Outside of the work-activities
 - iii. Strengthening of relationships
 - c. Finding a sport that everyone likes
5. Overall opinions and continuation amidst the program?
- a. Varying attitudes towards health programs
 - i. Inspiration for healthy lifestyle and individual tracking
 - ii. Resistance for the programs
 - 1. Shame
 - iii. Own hobbies are enough
 - b. Own physical and psychological targets
 - c. Willingness for participating again with some modifications

Appendix 2 – Interview questions in the original interviewing language

1. Mikä saa/sai sinut osallistumaan FirstBeatiin / kuntoilemaan enemmän?
(liittyykö se jollain tapaa työhön)
 - Liikunnallinen tausta
 - Tavoite
 - Terveydelliset vaikutukset
2. Kuinka isossa roolissa työpaikka/yritys on ollut sinun liikkumisen/urheilun lisääntymisessä?
 - Muiden liikkuminen motivoi?
3. Oletko huomannut eroa aikaisempaan?
 - Oletko huomannut henkisiä hyötyjä fyysisten lisäksi?
4. Koetko että liikunnalla (tarkemmin FirstBeatilla) on ollut positiivinen vaikutus työssä jaksamiseen ja sitoutuneisuuteen?
 - Uskotko että kannustimet liikuntaan yrityksen puolesta edesauttaisivat näitä?
 - Enemmän innostunut, tuntuu että jaksaa paremmin, että välitetään...
 - Esimerkkejä?
 - Jotain negatiivisia puolia?
5. Onko liikunnallisuus/kuntoilu yleistä työpaikalla ja koetko sen olevan tärkeä työyhteisön ilmapiiriä nostattava tekijä?
 - Kollegojen mieliala, jos he liikkuvat
 - Syvemmän suhteet, helpompi tulla toimeen?
6. Mitä tapahtuu jatkossa?
 - Samankaltaisten elämäntapojen jatkaminen
 - Tavoitteet
 - Ohjelmaan osallistuminen/FirstBeat

Appendix 3 – Translated interview questions

1. What makes/made you participate in FirstBeat in the first place? (Is it somehow related to work)
 - Athletic background
 - A goal
 - Health benefits
2. In how big of a role has your employer/ company had in terms of your improved physical activity/exercising?
 - The activeness of others motivates?
3. Have you noticed differences compared to time before?
 - Have you noticed psychological benefits in addition to physical ones?
4. Do you feel like activeness (more specifically participating in FirstBeat) has had an improving effect in terms of strength and engagement at work?
 - Do you feel like company-initiated incentives for physical activity would improve the situation?
 - More excited, feels like managing work is easier, feels like being cared of...
 - Examples?
 - Some negative sides?
5. Is sporting/being active normal at the workplace and do you feel it works as atmosphere-lifting factor for work community?
 - The mood of colleagues if they exercise
 - Deeper relationships, easier to get by with others
6. What happens in the future?
 - Maintaining current lifestyle
 - Goals
 - Participating a program/FirstBeat